

# The Officer Corps in Greece (1912–1936)

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The formation of the modern Greek army coincides with the efforts of the newly established Greek nation of the nineteenth century to import and emulate western institutions. The persistence of most governments in creating an officer corps inspired by the professional standards of western armies may be viewed as part of a general effort to modernize the Greek state. This attempt has invariably been thwarted by traditional practices which prevented modernizing forces from taking firm root in Greek reality. The degree to which professionalism was attained in the army depended both on the quality of military education and on the degree of professional security enjoyed by officers. Lack of security made some officers willing clients of ambitious cliques and agents of disruption of both military and political order.

An examination of the officer corps is attempted in the following stages: a brief survey of institutions responsible for military education, the origin of officers, factors that influenced their political allegiance, and the workings of military patronage.

The Military Academy or *Scholi Evelpidon* was founded in 1828 to provide the newly liberated nation with its first professional officer corps. The war of independence, waged with the aid of private bands and volunteers—who owed allegiance to their leaders rather than to any central authority—had created a tradition of factionalism that hampered the task of unification.<sup>1</sup>

1. P. Pipinelis, *Η Μοναρχία εν Ελλάδι 1833–1843* (Athens, 1932), pp. 31–5.

An early sense of mission therefore developed among officers from Evelpidon who often combined an *esprit de corps* with social prominence.

Out of the forty-three cadets who entered Evelpidon in 1828 only eight graduated three years later. The output of officers from the Academy remained comparably low during the following sixty years, and until the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Greek army was basically made up of a small standing infantry and cavalry force that policed the countryside and chased brigands.<sup>2</sup>

Graduates of the Academy never ceased to constitute an elite within the army. Until 1912 they even belonged to a social elite, since the choice of a military career via the Academy was second only to the legal profession. The first son of a wealthy family would normally study law and assume the administration of the parental fortune, whereas a second would find it appropriate to enter the army and, more precisely, the artillery. Prospective officers had to rely on a steady income from their family or a financially sound marriage to supplement their low salary. In 1910, tuition cost one hundred drachmas a month, a considerable sum, about equivalent to a month's salary for a clerk, while a janitor would not earn more than seventy drachmas. The pay of a Second Lieutenant in 1915 was one hundred and forty drachmas, by no means justifying the investment of time and money necessary to achieve the position. A meal in a good restaurant cost two drachmas, but the price of an average suit was one hundred and twenty. Before 1913 competitive entrance examinations among secondary education graduates (one out of ten usually entered), good connections, and five years of studies were necessary in order to become an Academy graduate.<sup>3</sup>

The School for Non-Commissioned Officers, founded in 1882 for candidates of lesser social prominence and means, basically supplied officers for the infantry, the cavalry and the various corps and services. An initial service as an NCO and

2. *Μεγάλη Επρατιωτική καὶ Ναυτική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, VI (Athens, 1930), p. 218.

3. E. Stasinopoulos, *Ὁ Στρατὸς τῆς Πρώτης Ἐκατονταετίας* (Athens, 1935), pp. 47–83. General Army Headquarters, *Ἱστορία τῆς ὀργανώσεως τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Στρατοῦ* (Athens, 1957), pp. 84–8.

three years of studies gave one an opportunity to attain the second most prestigious origin in the officer corps. Seniority criteria favoured graduates of Evelpidon, since officers from the School for NCOs were ranked two months behind their colleagues graduating from the Academy at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

Universal conscription was decided in parliament in 1880,<sup>5</sup> but it was not until the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 that it was firmly enforced. From 1880–1911 the peace-time strength of the Greek army fluctuated between 15–25,000 men.<sup>6</sup> In 1912, however, the mobilized strength of the army exceeded the mark of 150,000 men set by the government. The mobilization of Greece's largest army up to that date and the demand for officers to command it profoundly affected the make-up of the officer corps.<sup>7</sup>

In the Military Academy drastic changes took place. From 1870 until 1912 the institution had been oriented towards technical training of artillery and engineer officers in accordance with the tradition of its French *École Polytechnique* prototype.<sup>8</sup> After 1913, the French Saint Cyr Academy became the new model for the Evelpidon, concentrating mainly on preparing officers for the infantry and the cavalry. The emphasis in military education was shifted from mathematics and theoretical subjects to practical training in the field while five years of studies were reduced to three. NCOs were allowed to graduate from the Academy after two years, while civilians were obliged to follow a year of preparatory courses in the Company for Cadet Candidates before beginning a two-year programme of studies. In 1914 the charter of the Evelpidon was revised to supply a large officer corps ready to take the field: 270 students had entered the institution, almost as many as had graduated from it throughout its initial fifty years of existence. Although admission quotas remained high until 1920, the proportion of Academy graduates in the officer corps

4. *Ἡ Σχολὴ Ἐθελπίδων* (Military Academy: Athens, 1933), p. 25.

5. *Μεγάλη Στρατιωτικὴ καὶ Ναυτικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, III, p. 353; D. J. Cassavetti, *Hellas and the Balkan Wars* (London, 1914), p. 59.

6. The peacetime strength of the Serbian army in 1907 was 36,605, while that of the Bulgarian army in 1908 was 52,500. *The Statesman's Yearbook* (London, 1908), pp. 1487, 1587.

7. D. Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923* (London, 1972), p. 316.

8. E. Stasinopoulos, *Ἡ Ἱστορία τῆς Σχολῆς Ἐθελπίδων* (Athens, 1954), pp. 130–2.

diminished markedly between 1912 and 1922 because of the influx of reserve officers and NCOs who had been granted regular commissions.

With wartime emergencies over by 1926 and technical education becoming again necessary, an extra year was added to the term of studies at Scholi Evelpidon. This four-year programme persisted for a decade.<sup>9</sup>

Tuition fees were abolished in 1917 but the social origin of cadets at the Evelpidon had begun to change significantly since the Balkan Wars. The larger number of admissions made the Academy accessible to all those who could afford it and the traditional preference for prominent members of society therefore gave way to a preponderance of less privileged candidates.<sup>10</sup> Officers who graduated between 1916 and 1920 often talk about the democratization of the army as a consequence of what they term the 'revolution' of 1909.<sup>11</sup> In reality, the turbulence of 1909 was an increasingly restless middle class, and respectable families stopped sending their children to the Academy once the institution became less exclusive and lost its social prestige.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the variety of career options had greatly increased after 1922 as a consequence of economic change, and the Academy with its free tuition began to attract mainly those who could not afford to pay for their own education.<sup>13</sup>

By 1922 only one fifth of the combatant officer corps consisted of Academy graduates. The percentage grew to one quarter in the following eight years because many reserve officers granted regular commissions were retired during peace

9. *Επετηρίς του Στρατού* (Army List: Athens, 1930).

10. A. Haralambis and K. Nider, *Ιστορικὸν Ὑπόμνημα περὶ τοῦ Τακτικὸῦ Ἐτρατοῦ τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Ministry of War, Athens, 1907), pp. 8–20. Interviews with Generals Athanasios Tountas, Gerasimos Stratiotis and Colonel Epaminondas Stasinopoulos.

11. A non-violent military demonstration directed mainly against royal influence in the armed forces. Threats of intervention compelled the political authorities to give in to army demands.

12. In a conversation with Col. C. Arnold in 1937, King George II of the Hellenes expressed his regret that there were no gentlemen in the Greek army as there had been before the war. FO 371/21147/R2346/349/19. Enclosure in the despatch of 29 March 1937 to the Foreign Office.

13. Questionnaire distributed to 100 surviving officers of the interwar period. Army Lists of 1922, 1925, 1930.

time. Graduates of the Evelpidon reached the highest ranks in greater percentage than did other officers. In the Army List of 1930, all eight lieut.-generals and nine out of the twenty-eight major-generals were graduates of the Military Academy.

In the Army List of 1925 nine of the nineteen lieut.-generals, twenty-six of the twenty-nine infantry colonels, and 50 per cent of the infantry lieut.-colonels were graduates of the School for NCOs. There were a few graduates of the same institution in the cavalry, and fewer still majors in both infantry and cavalry. Owing to the fact that the school was discontinued in 1915, this category of officers was numerically the smallest in the army but its reputation was second only to that of Academy graduates.

Reserve officers who had been granted a regular commission form the largest category in the Army List of 1925. These were conscripts who at the end of their military service were presented with the option of a permanent position in the army. Most of them had completed their secondary education and a few had attended the university before being conscripted, and their decision to remain with the service was more often than not dictated by lack of financial security. A brief and superficial contact with military education, as well as the circumstances under which they entered the army, hampered the professional behaviour of these officers. This, coupled with a degree of civilian radicalism, made reserve officers a constant threat to hierarchy and discipline. Their frequent involvement in politics and military societies affected the behaviour of the entire corps during the interwar period. For this they earned the increased contempt of Academy graduates who never accepted them as their equals either in 'moral' character or in military education.

The intense interest of officers who had been granted regular commissions in military conspiracies can also be explained by their lack of professional security. The least stable group in the service (having suffered many enforced retirements and subsequent recalls), they constituted a kind of thermostat of the corps: whenever the Army List was too crowded, they were the first to go. Their dependence on military and political patrons had therefore become a condition for survival. Since most regular commissions were given between 1913 and 1920, especially during Eleftherios Venizelos' term of office, there was a strong propensity among these officers to support the Liberal

leader.<sup>14</sup> Within the broad patronage of Venizelos, they formed groupings loyal to such military strongmen as Pangalos, Plastiras, Kondylis or Othonaios. Reforms in the system of promotion in the Army List, proposed between 1933 and 1935 by the Minister of Army Affairs, Kondylis,<sup>15</sup> made reserve officers with regular commissions the primary target of anti-Venizelist attacks.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the fact that the practice of granting regular commissions to reserve officers stopped after 1922, the latter group, along with NCOs who had risen from the ranks, constituted three-quarters of the entire officer corps in 1925.<sup>17</sup>

Military interventions were usually instigated by a minority of officers with intense political commitments. Whereas the majority of graduates from Evelpidon exhibited limited participation in politics,<sup>18</sup> a small percentage among them sought to maintain the benefits of acquired privileges by acting as patrons to various military groupings. A politically favoured

14. Eleftherios Venizelos (1864–1936), a Cretan bourgeois of nationalist background, entered Cretan politics in 1889 and became a leading figure in the revolutionary movement for unification with Greece. From the moment he arrived in Athens in 1910 at the invitation of the officers of the ‘Military League’ until his death in exile in 1936 he dominated Greek politics. Founder and leader of the Liberal Party, which became the springboard for many distinguished politicians, and sometimes patron of such politicians in the army as Pangalos, Plastiras, Kondylis, Othonaios, Manetas and others. Although not opposed to the monarchy in principle, he was widely associated with the republican cause due to his feud with King Constantine during the First World War.

15. Georgios Kondylis, retired General, in 1933 left the Venizelist camp and joined the anti-Venizelists. As Minister of Army Affairs in a Populist government he became the scourge of republican officers.

16. *Official Parliamentary Minutes. Assemblies 1–28* (‘Επίσημα Πρακτικά της Βουλῆς) 27 March–11 September 1933 (Athens, 1934), pp. 311–12, 314, 335, 337. Pangalos’ view of officers who had been granted regular commissions is such that he wrongly accuses them in his *Memoirs of boycotting participation in the revolt of 1916*. T. Pangalos, *Τὰ Ἀπομνημονεύματά μου*, II (Athens, 1959), p. 150. Markos Kladakis makes frequent references to the ‘different’ ethos of such officers in his private papers.

17. Interviews with A. Tountas, M. Kladakis, G. Stratiotis, A. Tsingounis, S. Giorgoulis, L. Spais, C. Tsigantes, S. Papaspyros.

18. Military Academy Class of 1916 had 280 graduates of whom 53 were active Venizelists. The Class of 1922 had 69 graduates of whom 20 were active Venizelists. Political position of graduates identified by the officers mentioned in n. 17.

elite of senior officers from the Academy and a clientele of insecure juniors, mostly among those granted regular commissions, were the active agents of Venizelism in the service. Although Venizelists may be estimated as forming roughly half of the entire officer corps, willingness of officers to take part in a coup was usually determined by personal motives; hence participation in each separate instance was limited.

Although there is some connection between social class and political preference, it would not be safe to maintain that social background was the determining factor in the formation of political allegiance among the military. Family influences, influences by peer groups and patron-client relationships were more responsible for the final choice of a young officer. In cases of officers with urban middle class background, the political affiliation of their families appear to have been the strongest force in shaping their ideology. Officers of peasant origin were more susceptible to political influences within the military schools since the countryside of Greece had little concern for party ideologies.

In the awarding of appointments to the Academy staff, political criteria were strictly observed. Between 1914 and 1922, ten of the fourteen commanders of the Academy were friends of the King, while Venizelos held the monopoly of the institution between 1922 and 1934.

After 1925 there was a declining interest in Venizelism among junior officers. The numerous Venizelist military interventions between 1922 and 1926 caused the successive dismissal and recall of many senior and middle-ranking officers, resulting in a surplus of officers in the higher ranks. By 1928 colonels occupied positions normally held by captains and as a consequence there were no promotions of first and second lieutenants for more than eight years. The growing anti-Venizelism among juniors in the army was a form of protest against an establishment that denied them the opportunity for improvement of status.<sup>19</sup>

19. Army Lists of 1922, 1925, 1930 (Athens, 1922, 1925, 1930). I have gone through the Army Lists of combatant officers of that period and have noted the affiliations of officers listed. Interview with General T. Pentzopoulos, Athens, October 1971. N. Theotokis, *Η στρατιωτική κατάσταση και η πολιτική* (Athens, 1911), p. 102.

TABLE I<sup>20</sup>

Military Academy Commanders between  
1914 and 1935 and their Political Affiliations

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|---|---------|
| Col. G. Hadjanestis (anti-Venizelist)           | 1914–15 |
| Lt.-Col. I. Negrepontis (Venizelist)            | 1915–16 |
| Lt.-Col. K. Konstantinopoulos (anti-Venizelist) | 1916–17 |
| Lt.-Col. N. Kladas (anti-Venizelist)            | 1917    |
| Lt.-Col. A. Vlachopoulos (anti-Venizelist)      | 1917    |
| Col. C. Hadjimichalis (Venizelist)              | 1917–18 |
| Lt.-Col. I. Verettas (anti-Venizelist)          | 1918    |
| Lt.-Col. P. Klados (Venizelist)                 | 1917–18 |
| Col. L. Houdalis (Venizelist)                   | 1918–20 |
| Col. K. Konstantinopoulos (anti-Venizelist)     | 1920    |
| Col. N. Kladas (anti-Venizelist)                | 1920–21 |
| Col. G. Tsontos-Varlas (anti-Venizelist)        | 1921    |
| Major-General K. Skarlatos (anti-Venizelist)    | 1921–22 |
| Col. E. Vernardos (anti-Venizelist)             | 1922    |
| Major-General Th. Pangalos (Venizelist)         | 1922    |
| Col. G. Gonatas (Venizelist)                    | 1922–24 |
| General P. Klados (Venizelist)                  | 1924    |
| General G. Soliotis (Venizelist)                | 1924–29 |
| General M. Kimisis (Venizelist)                 | 1929–30 |
| General G. Delagrammatis (Venizelist)           | 1930–34 |
| General E. Politis (anti-Venizelist)            | 1934–35 |
| General G. Tsolakoglou (anti-Venizelist)        | 1935–36 |

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Col. G. Phessopoulos' manual on psychology in the army gives the reader the impression that the Greek army of 1924 had attained a level of excellence that left little to be desired. The progressive ideas on organization and human relations propounded in this guide for young officers were barely applicable to the Greek army and bear no relevance to the actual state of its affairs. Although the author does mention having been influenced by French military manuals, he makes little effort to draw the line between Greek and French experience. His tendency to idealize reality is common among his contemporaries.<sup>21</sup> A parallel existence of a world of words

20. Stasinopoulos, *Ίστορία της Σχολής Εθελπίδων*, p. 15. The political affiliations of the officers have been identified by the officers mentioned in n. 17.

21. Only in one instance does the author appear to be consistent with actual attitudes. He states that if the régime fails to protect the army from the meddling of politicians, higher ranking officers should rescue its prestige. G. Phessopoulos, *Ψυχολογία ἐν τῷ στρατῷ* (Athens, 1924), pp. 116–17.



alongside the actual one did not seem to disturb anyone in spite of the apparent incompatibility of these two worlds. No officer has yet admitted that military interventions had anything to do with the promotion of professional interests. The very word 'profession' is repulsive to most officers who rather wish to attribute an almost mystical significance to their vocation. The gap between high-sounding verbiage and prosaic reality is as surprising to the uninitiated student as the agreement of interwar officers on basic values and principles of a political and military nature, regardless of their political disputes. Disagreement begins when it comes to choosing the person or party that best represents or personifies these commonly accepted values.<sup>22</sup>

Given the need for ambitious Military Academy graduates to attach themselves to influential figures in the army, Prince Constantine and his principal military adherents had become a guarantee of good fortune for those whom they befriended. Officers who found their way to royal patronage were automatically exposed to an atmosphere of Germanophile sentiments. Such royalists as Stratigos, Exadaktylos, Metaxas and Papavasiliou were all sent to Germany for post-graduate military studies by royal request. Among them, Ioannis Metaxas, a product of impoverished Cephalonian gentry, felt he was allied to the King by bonds of tradition. His claims to dubious nobility, however, were shared also by officers of the liberal camp. The anti-royalist prejudice of such officers as Mazarakis, Danglis, Paraskevopoulos and Pangalos may be explained by the particular events that led each to become a client of Venizelos and his pro-Entente policy during World War II. The allegation of some of their contemporaries that these officers had acquired a liberal outlook precisely because they had been trained in republican France, whereas those who had studied in Germany had been favourably predisposed towards a strong monarchy, is somewhat exaggerated. Since the

22. The contention of K. Legg that 'one of the major requirements for national consciousness, the existence of mutually compatible values, has not been met' is not supported by the evidence. The consensus on mutually compatible values is complete; opinions of officers interviewed on what is beneficial for society and what harmful differ only in detail. Differences of opinion lie in identifying the people and parties that best represent these values. K. L. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece* (Stanford, 1969), pp. 81–2.

dedication of the French army to liberal ideology was debatable before World War I,<sup>23</sup> we would venture to suggest that it was not so much a question of French liberalism determining the affinity of some officers to Venizelos' policy but vice versa. Metaxas' complaints against the politically disruptive influence of the French mission are hardly justified by the small number of officers who took part in Venizelos' pro-Entente coup of 1916.

Since we are here dealing with a sample of officers that formed the vanguard of both camps, Venizelists and Royalists, it should be noted that similarities in their social origin and economic position make it hard to relate each group to specific class allegiances. Danglis, a Venizelist, and Dousmanis, a Royalist, came from prominent families in the same sense that Metaxas, a Royalist, and Mazarakis, a Venizelist, belonged to a kind of traditional gentry. Paraskevopoulos, Stratigos, Pangalos and Exadaktylos shared a middle-class background. All were graduates of the Academy.

The greatest percentage of officers, whether Venizelists, Royalists or neutralists, had not enjoyed the benefits of post-graduate training in either France or Germany, and came from a less prominent background than those who formed the leadership of each camp. We have already mentioned that throughout the 'twenties, reserve officers granted regular commissions made up the largest category in the army. While the majority of Academy graduates remained detached from specific affiliations, most of the officers granted regular commissions were overwhelmingly dedicated to the liberal camp.

The general inability of the military to defend their interests by forming legal associations was usually compensated for either by a traditional code of behaviour that enabled them to endure professional hardships, or by the formation of secret associations leading to military interventions. The usual radicalism of reserve officers granted regular commissions, although it possessed no coherent ideology, was indicative of their relative impotence to protect their weak position. The populist government of 1933 made concerted efforts to increase the numbers of officers with the greatest occupational security, namely Academy graduates, at the expense of other categories.

23. A. Vagts, *A History of Militarism* (New York, 1959), p. 318.

Realizing that Academy graduates were the most law-abiding officers, the Minister of Army Affairs Kondylis demanded a 100 per cent increase of such officers in the army, while the Liberals vehemently opposed the measure.<sup>24</sup>

The memoirs of General Alexander Mazarakis-Ainian provide a rare insight into the life of an Academy graduate who occupied the highest ranks and posts between 1922 and 1935. Given that Constantine Mazarakis had already entered the military field, the ambition of his younger brother Alexander to follow his example was contrary to the usual practice of large families where each son was urged to assume a different profession, thus increasing the versatility of the family unit. Fascinated by the predominant irredentist ideology of 1890 and the romance of military life, Alexander Mazarakis abandoned his law studies to enter the Evelpidon Academy. Conditions there, however, failed to live up to the young cadet's expectations:

There is no real comradeship among cadets, that is why later in life the brittle bonds of friendship among graduates are easily destroyed by the slightest rivalry.<sup>25</sup>

There is nothing in his memoirs to indicate that family influences were ever superseded by a separate military mentality. He testifies that the Evelpidon Academy of 1893 was an exclusive social club where favouritism was rife. He regrets, however, that after the Balkan Wars prominent families had preferred to make their children 'brokers and dealers' rather than officers.

I do not believe that the military profession should belong to one social class. . . . I believe, nevertheless, that a measure of tradition is necessary so that young officers may survive the

24. *Official Parliamentary Minutes*, Period D, Sessions 1–28, 27 March–11 September 1933, Vol. A (Athens, 1934), pp. 311–12, 314, 335.

25. Mazarakis' testimony concerning relationships among Academy cadets is confirmed by General Thrasyvoulos Tsakalotos, an anti-Venizelist: 'I don't know whether it is a spirit of competition or simply a selfish concern for personal promotion that is responsible for the loosening of the bonds of friendship forged among fellow-students at the Military Academy'. A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *Απομνημονεύματα* (Athens, 1948), p. 7; T. Tsakalotos, *40 Χρόνια Στρατιωτής της Ελλάδος*, I (Athens, 1960), p. 36.

materialistic temptations of civilian life and persevere in loving their profession in spite of the hardships it offers.<sup>26</sup>

Mazarakis gives the following reasons to explain why children of good families had ceased to enter the military profession: (1) the hardships of the wars between 1912 and 1922, (2) the development of Greece which created posts away from urban centres. (Up to 1910 most units were stationed in Athens or within close distance, allowing officers to indulge in social activities in their ample spare time.<sup>27</sup>) (3) He felt that for the idealism of the ruling class had been substituted base materialism and egotism. His opposition to materialistic bourgeois values is typical of most officers of the interwar period.<sup>28</sup> Whether they were liberal or royalist, they use the same language when it comes to upholding honour over expedience and the good of the country over personal interests. Although the degree of consistency varies among the different categories of officers, traditional western military values are more often expounded than practiced. Private correspondence of officers, in which tortuous efforts are made to reconcile economic problems with patriotism, indicate the conflict that existed in their minds between incompatible priorities. Their effort to distinguish the civilian from the military identity acquired a linguistic mantle according to which honour and duty became the primary motives behind all their actions.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Venizelist 'patricians' such as Mazarakis, Haralambos Papathanasopoulos, also a Venizelist, belonged to the wrong side of the military tracks. He was born in 1890 of poor parents

26. Mazarakis, p. 7.

27. In 1903 three-quarters of the 1,876 officers on active service were stationed in Athens. W. Miller, *Greek Life in Town and Country* (London, 1905), p. 245.

28. A. Mazarakis completed his Memoirs in 1943.

29. *The Plastiras Papers*, housed in the Benaki Museum, Athens. No material from these papers has been published, and this is the first occasion when their use has been permitted. Nikolaos Plastiras (1883–1953) was a brave officer of peasant origin who had risen from the ranks. He served in the Balkan Wars and joined the Venizelist revolution of 1916. As Colonel and regimental commander during the Asia Minor campaign he created an entourage of ardent admirers. After the military collapse of 1922 he led the revolt in September against the royalist government of Athens. Although retired in 1923, he remained active in military politics until World War II.

and was conscripted in 1911. He became a reserve officer in 1912 and was granted a regular commission under Law 328 in 1914. In 1917 he became a first lieutenant, in 1919 a captain, and in 1923 a major. During the Asia Minor campaign he was befriended by Plastiras and was made his aide-de-camp.<sup>30</sup> His attachment to Plastiras in the patron-client sense continued throughout the interwar period, during which time he considered it his duty to keep his patron informed on all matters—including his personal troubles. In a letter written in April 1924 he wrote to Plastiras:

It is difficult for an officer to live in the army with his honour intact if he has not graduated from the Military Academy. I have often thought of retiring . . . but I was restrained by the fear that it would be generally supposed that I had left in pursuit of utilitarian concerns. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Papathanasopoulos' bitter complaints are directed against the preferential treatment of Academy graduates who refused to accept him as an equal. Since honour required a certain amount of independence and integrity, his inferior position in the army had set his *philotimo* (sense of honour) in constant danger. The paradox about honour is that the more one tries to safeguard it, the more it becomes liable to be slighted. The search for patrons to strengthen one's position entailed obligations which imposed further limitations on one's independence. This partly explains the fact that in spite of his great concern for his honour, Papathanasopoulos on most occasions managed to be with the winning side—be it the republicans in 1924 or the moderate Pangalists in 1926. As a consequence of his flexibility he gained the reputation of being *aphilotimos* (without honour). It should be noted that the standards whereby honour is judged are always much more severe when others are concerned. Those who would condemn Papathanasopoulos may easily overlook their own moral shortcomings.

Papathanasopoulos is in many ways a typical product of the competitive spirit that prevailed in the army. His basic distrust of others and his cynical view of human nature justify his

30. Unpublished memoirs of N. Deas.

31. *Plastiras Papers*.

inclination towards authoritarianism. In his letter of 2 February 1924 he wrote to Plastiras:

Greece does not need an Assembly nor a Democracy, it needs an enlightened tyrant . . .<sup>32</sup>

In his letter of 23 February 1924 he approves of the military putting pressure on the government in order to promote the republican cause, thereby making a very lucid appraisal of politics in Greece:

Here in Greece the public is always divided into three categories: the two or three political factions who make up the minority of the voting population, and the moderates or attentists who form the majority. This latter category always accepts power as an accomplished fact and hence joins the ranks of the most powerful faction. The great electoral victories are due to this phenomenon. That is why we (the army) ought to present the public once more with an accomplished fact and win them to our side during the plebiscite. The policy of Kafandaris (Prime Minister) had given the impression that he was weak, whereas ours convinced the people that we are strong.<sup>33</sup>

Papathanasopoulos did not fail to ask for occasional favours which he considered normal in the context of their relationship. In return he kept Plastiras informed about every single turn of events. The role of the latter as a patron was not limited to material favours but extended to moral guidance as well. In 1925 Papathanasopoulos made Plastiras his confessor by admitting that his pitiful financial state had driven him to appropriate funds from a regimental treasury. His father-in-law not only failed to deliver the dowry but in addition abandoned his own wife to the care of his son-in-law. He wrote to Plastiras that he expected no sympathy from him, and that it was only out of a need to prostrate himself before a 'higher individual' that he decided to make his confession. Plastiras must have shown a

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid. Cf. J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford, 1970), p. 197: 'Strength and not justice appears to be the basis of honour in a traditional society of the mountains'.

patron's magnanimity in this instance because the flow of correspondence does not cease. During the Pangalos dictatorship, Papathanasopoulos complained about the waning prestige of the officer corps, and claimed that he would have handed in his resignation if he had completed the years of service required for an adequate pension (letter of 18 April 1926).<sup>34</sup>

The need to rely on personal contacts for professional advancement, although varied according to one's position in the army, drove junior officers to a frantic search for military patrons. The nature of military patronage was flexible (except for periods of political division), allowing a client the possibility of changing patrons if his own was in no position to help. The client was in turn the patron of lower-ranking officers, etc. In this way entire clientage networks were formed including NCOs, junior and senior officers. Although such networks would often follow the hierarchical pattern of the army—as was the case with the 'Military League' of 1923—clients were only responsible to their own patron. Each patron could offer the services of his clients to his own patron, but it was only through his personal intervention that this transfer of loyalty was effected. Whatever similarity may appear therefore to exist between clientage networks and formal hierarchies—where each subordinate is obliged to obey all his superiors in rank—it is a very superficial one. The effect of clientage networks on formal hierarchies can in fact be very destructive. Since clientage networks are often antagonistic to each other, a General may be refused obedience if junior officers under his command belong to a hostile network.

Antagonism among officers of the same political camp but of different clientage networks was not infrequent. Pangalos in his memoirs reserves a paragraph of abuse in each chapter for Mazarakis, reminding the reader that the latter was a spiteful man, a fanatic and a plagiarist of historical facts. By the very rancour of these attacks the reader is led to think that Pangalos himself was not free of such flaws of character. On the other hand, General Paraskevopoulos, who was the latter's patron, is generously praised.<sup>35</sup>

34. *Plastiras Papers*.

35. Pangalos, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 9, 14.

The table below will indicate the basic changes in the character of military patron-client relationships between 1897 and 1935.

TABLE II

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|---------------|--|
| (1) 1897–1909 | Exclusive character of royal patronage was opposed by the majority of the officer corps. Demands that the princes be removed from the army and navy were combined with aspirations for modernization.  |
| (2) 1909–1916 | Period of contentment due to Liberal reforms and the prospects of professional improvement opened by the Balkan Wars. Exclusive royal patronage was replaced by a flexible and open patronage.   |
| (3) 1916–1923 | The breakdown of flexible patronage with the coming of <i>dichasmos</i> <sup>36</sup> affected the army as much as it did civilian society. The ability to change patrons from one political camp to another was no longer possible. Patrons on the other hand could recruit clients from the opposite camp being in a position of strength. |
| (4) 1923–1933 | With the removal of the King and the eclipse of his political following, flexible patronage was restored in an army dominated by antagonistic patrons of Venizelist origin.  |
| (5) 1933–1935 | The advent of the Populist party revived the old <i>dichasmos</i> . The failure of the Venizelist coup of 1935 removed the republicans from the army and heralded a period of royalist influence in the armed forces.  |

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Flexible and open patronage that regulated military relationships before 1895 was transformed into a relatively exclusive and static one as soon as members of the royal family assumed command of the army. Prince Constantine's clients had all reached prominence thanks to their protector, but none constitutes a better example of the workings of royal patronage than Metaxas. As a young officer he had often been critical of the royal family. In his diary he has noted on 24 September 1896:

It is time for corruption to cease; and the King is not uninvolved in this dirty business of extending favours, but he will regret it.<sup>37</sup>

Later, in the course of the war of 1897, Metaxas met Dousmanis who introduced him along with Papavasiliou and Stratigos to Prince Constantine. His new relationship with the palace was

36. National schism over the issue of joining the Triple Entente during the First World War.

37. I. Metaxas, *Τὸ Προσωπικόν του Ἡμερολόγιον*, I (Athens, 1951), p. 94.



heralded with a serious reconsideration of his past views. He discovered that the Prince (Constantine) was the only important figure of his time, and felt that only people of aristocratic descent like himself could harbour a deep loyalty for the monarchy.<sup>38</sup>

A struggle has begun between the Crown Prince and parliamentary government. It is only a phase of the great conflict that will follow. I hope to find a chance to drink the blood of some parliamentarian!<sup>39</sup>

In 1898 Metaxas was promised by Constantine that he would be sent to Germany for military studies on state funds. Metaxas' hopes were momentarily endangered by a government act proclaiming open competition for the scholarships. He felt that if he submitted to examinations he would run the risk of failure. Dousmanis, who came to his rescue, persuaded Constantine to reverse the official decision concerning the examinations. The Prince convinced the Prime Minister to introduce an amendment to the bill, narrowing the qualifications of those eligible to participate to fit a description of Metaxas, who thus left for Germany praising the wisdom of his patron. In spite of the fact that he usually scrutinized his actions, nowhere in his diary does he betray signs of a guilty conscience for having secured his scholarship by such means.<sup>40</sup> George Seferis quotes a client of Metaxas justifying his patron's Germanophile stand during World War I:

You see, at the time Metaxas had been in debt to King Constantine who had been his benefactor and had educated him . . .<sup>41</sup>

It had been expected, it seems, that Metaxas should share his patron's political views in times of crisis, even at the expense of other priorities. Loyalty to all patrons was not, however, equally forthcoming. The exclusive and therefore more gratifying

38. Ibid., p. 507.

39. Ibid., p. 461.

40. Ibid., pp. 382–3.

41. G. Seferis, *Χειρόγραφο*, Σεπτ. 1941 (Athens, 1972), p. 44.

patronage of the King demanded and indeed secured a lasting obligation. Whereas Metaxas had been consistently loyal to Constantine until the latter's death, he disavowed his other patron, Dousmanis, when he ceased to be of any use.

In spite of the noble pronouncements of the 'Military League' of 1909 that it would abolish favouritism, what in fact it did achieve was to substitute for static royal patronage a flexible open patronage system, thus increasing the number of patrons in the field.

Complaints against biased entrance examinations in military schools had been widespread before 1909. The notorious 'bilietaki'—a visiting card of some patron with the name of his client on it, slipped into the pocket of the examiner—would largely determine success. Infantry Sergeant Nikolaos Plastiras attributed his failure to enter the School for NCOs in 1908 to such practices. His conviction that he had been victimized by favouritism became a primary motive in his subsequent activities. In October 1908 he collaborated with colleagues of his regiment to organize a chapter of the 'Military League' there. When the *pronunciamento* of 1909 was made, Plastiras was among its most active supporters. After failing once more to enter the School for NCOs, he took issue with the head of the movement, Col. Zorbas himself. He previously threatened the members of the examining committee that he would not stand for such treatment since he was a sterling member of the 'League' and had fought for the abolition of favouritism. Whether correct in assuming that it was lack of connections rather than lack of ability that denied him entrance or not, Plastiras was finally granted admission at the end of 1909.<sup>42</sup>

Mazarakis mentions a similar instance after 1909, indicating that favouritism had merely changed character as well as patrons and clientele.

In Athens we took examinations at the War College (a post-graduate institution for staff officers). Three out of the seven candidates had failed to secure entrance, but one of them happened to be the brother-in-law of Zorbas—then Minister of the Army—and the results of the examination were annulled . . .<sup>43</sup>

42. I. Peponis, *Νικόλαος Πλαστήρας 1909–1945* (Athens, 1948), pp. 23–6.

43. Mazarakis, p. 101.

The case of General Leonardopoulos and Lieutenant Tsakalotos is one where patronage crossed political lines in spite of the national schism (*dichasmos*) period. This was made possible by the fact that at a time of Venizelist supremacy Leonardopoulos, although a Liberal, could afford to be magnanimous and extend his favour to a repenting member of the Royalist camp. Tsakalotos had been among the many Royalists who had been accused of sedition and imprisoned by the courts of 1918. Leonardopoulos, who met Tsakalotos while inspecting the latter's prison cell, offered him the option of fighting under his command in a dangerous mission. Tsakalotos accepted the offer with enthusiasm and became Leonardopoulos' devoted client. He followed his patron in the Asia Minor expedition, in Thrace, and finally in launching the abortive coup of 1923 against Plastiras and Gonatas. After the failure of the coup and Leonardopoulos' downfall, Tsakalotos managed to escape arrest and dismissal by attaching himself to another influential Venizelist officer, General Klados. The latter, as Chief of General Staff in 1925, transferred him to an important position in the General Headquarters. The fact that he had fared so well under his Venizelist patrons did not prevent Tsakalotos from applauding the restoration of the monarchy in 1935 and the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936. His case is untypical only because he had managed to change camp during the period of the schism, a feat which required considerable agility.<sup>44</sup> The flexibility of his ideological position, however, and his attachment to the personalities from whom he derived benefits, regardless of what they stood for, epitomizes a client's behaviour in military politics.

Personal relations often resist ideological cleavages. Leonidas Spais mentions his friendly relations with Captain Gavalias before 1915 and notes with surprise that the latter refused to talk to him after the former had joined the Venizelist revolt of 1916 in Thessaloniki:

It was a strange thing indeed that this cultured man and brave patriot should become the victim of such a strong passion that would change him into an enemy of his friends . . .<sup>45</sup>

44. Tsakalotos, I, pp. 52, 66–8. Despite the usual pattern of inflexible relations caused by the *dichasmos*, such is the nature of patronage that it must always leave margin for manoeuvre.

45. L. Spais, *Πενήντα χρόνια στρατιώτης* (Athens, 1970), p. 59.

It appears that Spais did not consider the national schism a serious reason for disrupting personal relations, but qualifies his doubts about Gavalias' capacity to maintain personal loyalties by adding:

Before the Balkan Wars, Queen Sophia (wife of Constantine) had sent him to Switzerland for medical treatment and he had ever since become her blind instrument out of gratitude.<sup>46</sup>

In a proud display of the extent of his personal influence, Major Papathanasopoulos boasted to Plastiras that royalist officers had voted for the republic during the plebiscite of 1924 for his 'own sake'.<sup>47</sup>

Besides being an issue of social criticism, the favour of a powerful patron was considered a sign of personal worth. Few other references carried as much weight as using the name of a prominent patron in case of emergency or in order to gain social prestige. Dousmanis in his memoirs insists on informing the reader that it was through Constantine's personal intervention that he achieved his various positions of influence in the army.<sup>48</sup> What is typical of the system is that the more a favour was contrary to ordinary procedure, the more its recipient provoked envy for his good fortune and respect for his ability to associate with important people. In the same sense, the more complex the irregularity a patron had to commit in order to assist his client, the more reason for him to boast in public about his influence and power. This practice, however, was not without its dangers. Besides earning the criticism of the more educated and westernized elements of society for what they would consider provincial behaviour, an officer would provoke the jealousy and dislike of his peers precisely because of his good fortune. There was a delicate balance somewhere between acquiring status as a potential patron and provoking criticism.

In summary, then, the role of the army in politics was minimal until 1909. An exclusive Academy, yielding most of the officers, attempted with some success to imbue the children of a prominent social class with the high professional standards of its

46. Ibid., p. 59.

47. *Plastiras Papers*.

48. V. Dousmanis, *Απομνημονεύματα* (Athens, 1946), p. 28.

French military prototypes. The democratization of the officer corps after 1914 diminished the social prestige of the military profession significantly. The sudden demand for large numbers of officers to serve a growing army made the reserve officers who were granted a regular commission the majority in the officer corps. Because of their incomplete exposure to military education and their professional insecurity, this category of officers became the foremost agents of anomalies in the army as well as in politics. Since most had acquired their regular commissions during the Venizelos government, they became his devoted clients, thus alienating many Academy graduates from the Venizelos camp who rejected the non-professional behaviour of the officers in question. Although Academy graduates remained comparatively uninvolved in politics throughout the 'twenties, successive military interventions began to affect their interests. Dismissals of senior officers as a result of abortive coups gave way to mass promotions from the middle ranks. Subsequent recalls of dismissed officers resulted in surpluses of officers in the higher ranks. Since higher ranking officers were obliged to perform duties meant for their juniors, promotions in the lower ranks were delayed. Political anomalies encouraged the formation of informal groupings and the power of military patrons. Patron-client relationships adjusted to the changes of politics but never became extinct.

*Athens*